



A Message From The Secretary

The devastation of Hurricane Katrina (and more recently Hurricane Rita) has been difficult to watch, but the response from Kansans wanting to help has been tremendous. KDHE staff worked quickly after Hurricane Katrina to ensure the necessary actions were taken to assist evacuees with issues including immunizations, school entry, day care, foster care and birth records. Through our Web site, KDHE collected

names of health professionals willing to travel to Louisiana or Mississippi to assist; to date, nearly 200 Kansas health care professionals have offered their skills and volunteered their time to the disaster response, should they be needed.

These recent disasters quickly remind us of the importance of local, state and federal preparedness plans, as well as the need to practice those plans and improve communication with partners year round, rather than at the time of a crisis. In addition, we must remember the importance of individual preparedness all year long. If you haven't already prepared your family with a kit that would help you and them to remain self sufficient for at least three days, now is the time. Make sure you have plenty of bottled water, packaged food items, flashlights, battery-operated radios and batteries in the event of a lengthy power outage or other event. Additional information about preparing a family emergency kit is available at <http://www.ready.gov/>.

Another important thing we must each prepare for is the flu season. A vaccine is expected to be available throughout Kansas later this month, and those individuals most vulnerable to severe complications are urged to get a flu shot early. Each one of us should take time this season to get a flu shot because of the added protection it provides. But a flu shot isn't the only thing we can do to protect ourselves from influenza. We should wash our hands frequently and thoroughly, get plenty of rest, and eat healthily to ensure our immune system is strong and can resist illness. We can protect others by covering our cough and staying home when we're sick. World and national health experts believe a pandemic flu is imminent, and KDHE has a plan to address the impact it could have. But it's critical we each take steps to protect ourselves from influenza.

One way to ensure we stay healthier is to focus on keeping our environment healthy. KDHE invites Kansans to take part in an international event, World Water Monitoring Day, on Oct. 18. The KDHE Watershed Management Section will be donating 100 water test kits to individuals, groups and organizations willing to test 15 sites during the monitoring month. Each kit can test up to 50 sites. Volunteers then enter their test results into a global database that stores all information collected during the monitoring period at <http://www.worldwatermonitoringday.org/>. This is a good time to stop and think about the importance of water quality in our daily lives-something that's easy for us take for granted.

The KDHE 2005 United Way Campaign has kicked off and we're aiming high this year to help our communities more than ever. Last year, we exceeded our goal of raising \$15,000 and this year we're working toward a goal of \$16,000. When we think of those individuals devastated by recent hurricanes, we must also remember those in our communities who have ongoing needs for help. United Way organizations including the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army are there to provide that help year round. By being a part of the United Way's campaign, our money can touch lives we never imagined. Whatever you can give, large or small, will be extremely rewarding to you. Those impacted will be forever grateful for the step you took to make their lives better. Join me in making this KDHE United Way campaign the best ever.

Be well,